



PENDING CHURCH APPROVAL

CHILD AND CHILD CARE WORKER PROTECTION POLICY

South Point Baptist Church desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity or ministry. Each year children are victimized by individuals they know and trust. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across every racial, social, economic, and religious boundary. This *Child and Child Care Worker Protection Policy* reflects South Point Baptist Church's commitment to protect children, volunteers, and workers from all harm and appearance of evil. *The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of South Point Baptist Church working with minors.*

South Point Baptist Church will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

"Good touch" is important to each of us. Children do not grow and thrive without the good touch of others. Touch was important to Jesus as He took the little children into His arms and blessed them and comforted them. *Our Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another's shoulder or squeezing a hand to say, "You are loved."*

It is imperative that the Christian community not lose the importance of "good touch." We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. To a child who is upset, a warm hug and kind word can be most comforting. In the midst of our caution, let us not forget that good touch is just that – *good!*

DEFINITIONS

In this policy the following definitions will apply:

1. **Child or Minor:** Any person under the age of 18.
2. **Special Needs Person:** Any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations.
3. **Adult:** Any person age 18 and over.
4. **Youth Volunteer:** Active participant in the SPBC Youth Ministry program.
5. **Child abuse and neglect:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's welfare.
6. **Physical abuse:** Maltreatment which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries.
7. **Emotional abuse:** Maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development, including, but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child's performance, and isolation from normal social activities.
8. **Sexual abuse:** Maltreatment which consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including, but not limited to, physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism).
9. **Neglect:** Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision.
10. **Compensated workers:** Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees of the church who work with children.
11. **Volunteer workers:** Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church-sponsored activity.
12. **Caregiver:** Any adult compensated or volunteer worker working with children.
13. **Mandated reporter:** Any person with responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. If a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Children and Family Services.
14. **SPBC:** SPBC is the initial for South Point Baptist Church

SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER AND COMPENSATED WORKERS

The following procedures reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children and caregivers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. Volunteer workers must be faithful attendees of SPBC for at least four months.
2. All volunteers and compensated workers working with minors must complete the following application process before participating in any church-sponsored children's or youth activities :
 - A. All volunteer and compensated workers desiring to work with children must thoroughly complete a SPBC *Child and Worker Application* form.
 - B. All persons working with children must attend orientation/training activities as they are assigned or conducted, or the supervising ministry leader will debrief the volunteer on the material covered in the meeting.
3. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the SPBC *Child and Worker Protection Policy*.
4. All volunteer and compensated workers working with children shall be screened by a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings.
5. Persons who may pose a threat to minors (based on application response, reference feed back or other information) will be prohibited from working with them or the disabled.

Those who have been prohibited from working with minors for any reason can most certainly be forgiven and cleansed through the grace of Jesus Christ. However, sin does have consequences and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry at South Point Baptist Church, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's or youth ministries or with the disabled.

6. This application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Children's Ministries (Birth – Fifth Grade)

1. Caregivers, volunteers, and potential youth volunteers are expected to abide by all policies and procedures of the program they are serving in. These policies and procedures are specific to each program, event, or ministry and will be relayed to the volunteer or caregiver by the supervising leadership of the program via written handbook, in a meeting, or posted publicly. Youth Volunteers may be required to abide by additional rules, policies and regulations specific to serving.

2. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. Caregivers and volunteers will avoid the appearance of evil to the best of their ability.
3. There is a recommended minimum of two adults working together with children at all times. **However, compensated workers are considered trained, professional childcare providers and are allowed to care for children with appropriate adult to child ratios and do not have to have another adult present.** *Also, in a Bible study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/ groups with only one adult caregiver provided there are other adults present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.*
4. The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
5. When possible, children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs with an adult standing outside the closed door or standing nearby. Should assistance be required, the bathroom door should not be shut completely, only enough to provide some privacy but otherwise left propped open. Men should not assist with bathroom needs or change diapers except for their own children. When changing a diaper, adult female caregivers are required to follow all stated cleanliness policies that are posted in the classrooms.
6. Check in/Check out procedure and policy for childcare and ministry programs will be posted and/or explained to volunteers and compensated workers by the supervising leadership of the event or program and should be followed at all times.
 - A. Older siblings are not allowed to pick up younger siblings unless they are 12 years or older and the parent or guardian has given prior written permission.
 - B. Parents are to follow and cooperate with the check in/check out procedure of the program their child is participating in, seeing as check in/ and check/out procedure will vary from program to program.
 - C. All volunteers and compensated workers will uphold the proper check/in check/out procedure of the program they are volunteering or working for and explain the procedure to the parent upon drop off of the child.
 - D. Persons other than the child's parent or guardian must be authorized to pick up the child and will not otherwise be allowed to pick up the child. Authorization must be given in writing. If the attending volunteer or compensated worker cannot identify the person(s) a license will be required.
7. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.
8. The Pastor and supervising Ministry staff must approve any activities that are held off church campus. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained and there shall be a

minimum of two adult caregivers present.

9. Organized events on or off church campus shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:15, adult caregiver to child. Overnight events, such as camps and retreats, that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
10. Volunteers and compensated workers are required to abide by all rules, policies, and regulations of the program or event expressed to them by the supervising ministry staff or leader when working or volunteering with minors.
11. The premises of the children's ministry area will be monitored.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

South Point Baptist Church has determined that it is the responsibility of the ministerial staff and deacons to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper legal authorities with 24 hours of it being discovered. When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern.

As a caregiver, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse or neglect. Caregivers or volunteers will report abuse or neglect to the Minister of Children and (or) the Pastor. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to report all cases of child abuse or neglect they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse or neglect. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. The confidentiality of the pastor/attendee relationship is very important. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

What is probable cause? Probable cause means that the available facts when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, South Point Baptist Church has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:
 - a. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
 - b. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.
2. Report the abuse or neglect promptly to the Pastor or supervising Minister. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident initially *only* with any of these individuals.

RESPONSE OF SOUTH POINT BAPTIST CHURCH

South Point Baptist Church's primary function in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or neglect are to attempt to provide pastoral care to all who are affected, to attempt to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed, to seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected, and, to the extent possible, to respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If South Point Baptist Church receives an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the pastors will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, South Point Baptist Church will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that South Point Baptist Church takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

If an alleged abuser contacts the church officials about a complaint, SPBC personnel may confirm that they have received such a complaint only if they are certain the alleged abuser already knows this. They should avoid discussing the allegations or making any further comments until the proper authorities have an opportunity to conduct their investigation. They should not identify the alleged victim or complainant during an investigation.

If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the Pastor. Only the Pastor or his designee shall make comments about the allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPBC MINISTERIAL STAFF

In accordance with the Church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the ministerial staff shall do the following:

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
3. Contact the Department of Children and Family Services within 24 hours. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
4. Report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney.
5. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
6. Notify the parents or guardians.
7. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or special needs person is secured.
8. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
9. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
10. Use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

South Point Baptist Church *Child and Worker Protection Policy* Commonly Asked Questions

Is a criminal background check really necessary?

Sadly, the culture in which we live dictates that we must take drastic preventive measures to protect the children whose care we've been entrusted with. Furthermore, there are litigation issues: A church that hasn't performed background checks faces the risk of catastrophic financial penalties in the event that an allegation of abuse within the church leads to a conviction or out-of-court settlement.

Who needs to submit a SPBC *Child and Workers Application* and a *Permission to Obtain a Background Check* form?

Any church employee or volunteer who will have direct contact with any child, either on or off the church campus, during any church-related ministries must complete both of these forms.

Once I complete and sign these forms, to whom do I give them?

Give your completed forms to the supervising ministry staff or director, such as the Minister to Youth, Minister to Preschoolers and Children, or the director of the program you wish to be a part of. Example: if applying for AWANA you may return the forms to the AWANA directors.

I'm concerned about confidentiality and privacy issues. Who will see my application and more importantly, who will see the results of my background check?

Only those listed above, along with our church's administrative support staff, will see your application and the results of your criminal background check. All information will be kept in a secured filing cabinet in the church office.

I am not presently involved in any church volunteer work that involves young people. Should I submit an application and give permission for a background check?

As our church continues to grow, so do our children and youth discipleship ministries. Because the addition of programs to minister to these young people is ongoing, the demand for volunteers is always on the increase. Even though you may not be currently involved in such a ministry, at any time you feel led to serve, it's a good idea to go ahead and submit your forms.

What is a "US Criminal Record Indicator" database search?

The US Criminal Record Indicator is the most comprehensive and current search available in the United States. The US Criminal Record Indicator database search examines the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Administrative Office of the Courts, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and/or the Department of Criminal Justice files and records, and other applicable government agencies where available. Currently this search includes information from 39 states plus multiple online county records.

Why do I have to list my Social Security Number (SSN)?

A couple of reasons, the first is that your SSN is the primary key for all databases affiliated with a background check. The second reason is that your SSN is used to verify the following crucial information:

- whether the SSN is validly issued
- to whom the SSN belongs
- in which year and state the SSN was issued
- the current and other known or previous addresses to that SSN.

The SSN Verification process can reveal that the number belongs to another individual, has more than one name associated with it (i.e., produces other aliases) including maiden and divorced names, is associated with fraud, is not a validly issued SSN, belongs to a deceased person, produces additional addresses not stated by the application/request form, or if that individual has other SSN's. Anyone can give a false identification by using another person's Social Security number. This search ensures that the individual is who they say they are. The Social Security search is provided in the Basic Search along with the National Criminal Indicator search.

What criteria from the background check will determine whether or not someone is approved for volunteer work? Who makes that decision?

The background check will cite felony and misdemeanor convictions listed in the National Criminal Database Search. The most obvious reason that someone is denied the opportunity to do volunteer work in our church is any prior conviction pertaining to an offense against a child. It's quite unlikely, though, that a person with such a conviction would even submit an application. Misdemeanor convictions, and even some felony convictions, would have little or no negative impact in determining a person's worthiness as a church volunteer. To put it another way, the only determining factor in evaluating someone's criminal record is the likelihood of him or her posing a threat to our children.

In the event a felony conviction turns up on the report, the supervising minister with the counsel of the Pastor will decide whether or not to approve the volunteer for work with children.

Some final thoughts...

Please know that the intent of the background check is to protect the children in our church as well as our volunteers and compensated workers... period. Its purpose is *not* to cause you personal embarrassment by dredging up past mistakes or wrong choices. Regrettably, it's impossible to implement a viable screening plan without a bit of scrutiny into some personal background information.

Throughout the entire process of developing the *Child and Child Care Worker Protection Policy* for our church, a tremendous amount of concern and sensitivity has been shown in regard to matters of confidentiality. Much effort has been put into implementing screening procedures that limit the number of people who have visible access to private information. Please know that as the screening process evolves over the next several years, your pastoral staff and deacons will remain committed to the task of administering screening procedures with utmost regard to your privacy.